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# JAMES HEIGHE BLAKE

THE THIRD MAYOR OF THE CORPORATION  
OF WASHINGTON [1813-17]

*By*

ALLEN C. CLARK

REPRINT FROM VOL. 24  
COLUMBIA HISTORICAL SOCIETY  
WASHINGTON, D. C.



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By ALLEN C. CLARK

(Read before the Society, Nov. 16, 1920.)

IN THE family Bible, to the entry of birth of a son is added in Dr. Blake's handwriting, "Named after the celebrated Admiral Robert Blake from whose family he is a descendant."

Dr. Blake was of lineage, well born on both sides. The Blakes and Heighes were Maryland colonists, prominent in the Church of England; active in political affairs; and planters with slave holdings.

Richard Blake came from England and settled in Calvert county. He married Susanna or Susan Nichols, daughter of William Nichols. Their son Joseph married Mary Heighe, daughter of Thomas Holdsworth Heighe and Mary Holdsworth Wheeler, his wife. Their son, James Heighe Blake, was born in the same county, June 11, 1768.

Hester Dorsey Richardson, in *The Sun*, of Baltimore, May 22, 1904, says:

"Richard Blake of My Lordship's Favor in Calvert County was a prominent man in Colonial days, and his fine estate one of the notable homes in the hospitable region in which it was situated. His bride, Susanna Nichols, was known as the 'heiress of St. Edmonds.' Her father, William Nichols, was one of the men sent as representatives of the Province to England in 1695. Col. Joseph Blake, of My Lordship's Favor \* \* \* served with distinction all through the Revolutionary War."

To another son of Richard attaches romance. In the *Maryland Gazette*, January 25, 1770, is:



*Photo. by  
James H. Blake*

JAMES HIGHE BLAKE



"January 6, 1770. To All Seafaring Gentlemen.

"Richard Blake, Captain of a sloop bound to the West India Islands left Potomac River three years next August. And there being various reports that he is yet alive and under confinement in the Bay of Honduras in Hispaniola or in some part of the Spanish Main, and could have been ransomed for Twenty Five Pounds. We, the undersigned, do certify that he has an estate of his own worth some Hundreds of Pounds in Calvert County, Maryland, therefore his own obligation is sufficient surety for any Gentleman what will be good enough to make Enquiry for him, and procure his enlargement should he be in confinement. We do also beg all Sengoeing Gentlemen to enquire in their Travels if they can hear anything of the said Capt. Richard Blake or of John Wilkinson his mate to be alive or dead to give intelligence by letter to Mr. Charles Graham in Lower Marlborough on the Patuxent River, Maryland, and the Favor will be acknowledged by

Thomas Blake

Joseph Blake

William Dare"

This advertisement is in *The National Intelligencer*, March 6, 1809:

"Twenty Dollars Reward.

"Runaway from Subscriber's 'Plantation near Lower Marlbro' in Calvert county, about the 15th of January, a Negro man by the name of Cuddy; \* \* \* Whoever takes up said Negro and secures him so that I get him again shall receive the above reward, if taken upwards of 20 miles, if under 20 miles, 10 dollars.

"Thomas Blake."

Dr. Blake located in George Town. He purchased, November 3, 1795, the lot on the southwest corner of Congress (Thirty-first) and Gay (N) streets. Thereon he built a residence. It is so altered that aught of the external original cannot be seen.

In 1800, he removed to Colchester, Fairfax county, Virginia. Colchester is on the north bank of the Occoquan River just opposite Woodbridge in Prince William county. The R. F. D. runs by the place which now consists of a few scattered houses whose outside brick chimneys look defiant of time.

"But now the sounds of population fail,  
 No cheerful murmurs fluctuate in the gale,  
 No busy steps the grass-grown foot-way tread,  
 But all the bloomy flush of life is fled."

Goldsmith.

Colchester is a veritable deserted village. That it was a village with a main street and a street midway at right angles, a thoroughfare to the ford of the Occoquan, appears by Count de Rochambeau's plat exhibiting the surface proportions of each house therein as on the sixteenth day of July, 1782. Rochambeau's auxiliary French forces encamped on the border of the village.

Dr. Blake indulged his bent for governmental affairs and was approved of by a constituency of Fairfax County to represent it in the legislature. The records at Richmond show that he attended the sessions of 1806-7 and 1807-8, and that for 1806 he was allowed three dollars per day for fifty-one days attendance with sixty cents per mile for traveling and fifty cents for each ferry crossed.

Dr. Blake returned to the District of Columbia in 1809.

Dr. Blake was elected to the First Chamber, Ninth Council, 1810; and held over the ensuing year because of informality in the election.

The boards, June 14, 1813, convened to elect the Mayor. The first, second and third ballots, Mr. Brent and Mr. Rapine each had ten votes. Dr. Blake was substituted for Mr. Brent, and he and Mr. Rapine each had ten votes. Then by lot Dr. Blake drew the mayorship.

At the joint meeting, June 13, 1814, Dr. Blake had all the votes.

*The Intelligencer*, editorially, had, June 2, 1815:

"We have received a communication recommending to the attention of the citizens at the coming Election, the name of Col. William Brent for the office of Mayor for the next term. \* \* \* We must observe, that we have heard of no objection to the re-election of our present worthy Mayor, *James H. Blake*, who, we hope and have no doubt, will again be honored by the city's choice."



The councils met, June 12, and James H. Blake had 11 votes; William Brent 7; Samuel N. Smallwood 1; blank 1.

At the election June 10th, the following year, Dr. Blake had 13 votes; Benjamin G. Orr 6; Daniel Carroll of Duddington 1.

The Mayoral messages of Dr. Blake are comprehensive and concise and comprise the affairs important in all cities. Quite natural was his first expression and first recommendation:

"Of all the gods of this World, Health is the most durable; it is the Soul which animates every enjoyment."

"I beg leave to submit to you, whether it may not be expedient to appoint a Health Officer; whose particular duty it shall be to superintend the health of the city generally, and in case of the appearance of any malignant disease, to visit such infected persons; and report from time to time the state of the health of the City to the Board of Aldermen and Common Council; correct information from such a source, would prevent many idle and exaggerated accounts, too often propagated to the disadvantage of our City."

He in the first message advocated schools on the Lancastrian system, and a reformatory.

That there was no police at that time is indicated by the paragraph in that message:

The number of idle and disorderly persons that are in our streets at every hour of the night, disturbing the repose of the inhabitants and in many instances pillaging them—render it unsafe for the peaceable Citizen to pass along the street. With a view to check this growing evil, I will suggest the establishment of patrols."

In other messages Mayor Blake urged the office of Health Officer and in result it was created.

The Act of the Councils providing for street improvements, October 16, 1813, indicates the greater value of a dollar at that period for the appropriations are from \$25 to \$250 and for improving Fourteenth street west from Pennsylvania Avenue to the northern boundary of the city, the amount was \$100.

The suggestion of a reformatory brought an appropriation to rent from Mr. Greenleaf for a workhouse and other purposes a large three story brick building on Greenleaf's Point at \$100 per annum. The rent began November 22, 1813, as did the appointment of Major David Hopkins, Superintendent.

Mayor Blake stated, July 24, 1815, that "the improvement of the streets are greatly retarded for want of a Surveyor to the Corporation and when made are without correct gradation." The first Surveyor was Benjamin Henry Latrobe, the eminent architect, confirmed, October 10, 1815.

An exclusive section early developed and in the west end. By an ordinance, July 26, 1815, it became unlawful to keep geese south of Massachusetts Avenue and west of Eleventh Street. The seized geese were for the poor of the Infirmary and the trustees were directed to pay twenty-five cents for each goose delivered.

An experiment was made, November 21, 1815—a cruise of the Washington Canal of its entire length from the west end to the other end on the Eastern Branch—and its navigability was proven. The depth some places was four feet and at none less than three. On the cruise in the barge the guests, besides something else, had for exhilaration the band of the Marine Corps. The canal was never any good for commercial purposes except for sand scows and schooners laden with wood for fuel at the eastern part. Its stagnant waters provided the means for mosquitos to carry disease and all along the banks were the victims—the prevalent malady being intermittent fever, familiarly, chills and fever. In the grip of the chill the victims so shook as to make the clock and the vases on the mantel dance, and when in the grip of the fever was as eager as the rich man for a drop on the tip of his finger in water to cool his tongue, so tormented was he in the flame.

U. S. brig Niagara, off the Western Sister,  
Head of Lake Erie, Sept. 10, 1813. 4 P.M.

Sir—It has pleased the Almighty to give to the Arms of the United States a signal Victory over their enemies on this Lake. The British Squadron, consisting of ten ships, two brigs, one schooner and one sloop, have this morning surrendered to the force under my command, after a sharp conflict.

I have the honor to be,

Sir,

Very respectfully,

Your obedient servant,

O. H. Perry.

The Hon. William Jones,  
Secretary of the Navy.

The *Intelligencer* had an exultant editorial, September 22, 1813.

"A Glorious Victory.

\* \* \* \*

"Its moral consequence cannot but be highly auspicious to the future success of our infant Navy. The charm of British naval invincibility is destroyed. We have met the enemy *fleet to fleet* on worse than equal terms, and we have conquered them more decisively than they vanquished their enemies."

Captain Perry was to visit the city. The citizens were too appreciative of one who could coin such a sentence as "We have met the enemy and they are ours" and win such signal naval victories, to let the occasion slip by without a testimonial expressed in hospitality. The committee of arrangement was James H. Blake, Gabriel Duval, John Davidson, Thomas Monroe, Thomas Tingey, John Law, Buller Cocke, John P. Van Ness, Washington Boyd, Walter Jones, Jr., William Brent, Elias B. Caldwell, Daniel Carroll of Duddington and Joseph Cassin. The dinner was at Tomlinson's on Capitol Hill. The Secretary of Navy, Mr. Jones, and the Speaker of the House of Representatives, Mr. Clay, were of the guests. At five o'clock the table was ready. Captain Perry was ushered in by the president of the day, the Mayor.

Commodore Tingey was the vice-president and Mr. Carroll and Mr. Jones were assistants. "A full band of music added inspiration; and the greatest hilarity and satisfaction appeared on every countenance." The account also has "the company separated in good order about 10 o'clock."

The *Intelligencer*, June 30, 1814, under the headline "The Enemy Again," states its pleasure in witnessing the promptitude and alacrity with which the militia, from Washington, Georgetown, and Alexandria, in all about 280 men under their respective captains departed for the defense. It has the suggestion of the stripling going forth to give battle to the giant. David meeting Goliath.

It is a verity that the unpreparedness was not due to the District officers. General Van Ness had warned the Secretary of War and had been rebuffed. That the militia should be equal to the trained regulars of the British army was to expect the unreasonable.

And the Mayor in the message, June 30, 1814, has:

"I congratulate you, Gentlemen, that the appearance of danger from the enemy has for a time dissipated, yet when we reflect upon the temptations accorded by our metropolis, we ought not to calculate upon remaining unmolested by them—nothing short of an ample preparation will in my opinion, secure us against their assaults and more than savage conduct."

The Mayor's warning only antedates the enemy's descent twenty-four days.

"To the Citizens of Washington,

"The whole body of the Militia of this District having marched to meet the Enemy, it is earnestly requested that every man exempt from Militia Duty who is able to carry a musket will immediately enrol himself in the Ward in which he resides—and as soon as a sufficient number is enrolled, choose the necessary officers, who will class the companies for the purpose of patrolling the City and preserving order. Such as have not arms and ammunition will be furnished, upon application to either member of the Committee of Safety in their respective Wards.

"The Citizens are requested to be vigilant, and take up all

suspected persons; and none will be permitted to pass after 10 o'clock at night, without a reasonable and lawful excuse.

"The well known patriotism of the Citizens of Washington, is a sure guarantee that they will comply with so reasonable a request at a time of peril like the present. Affection for our Wives, Children and Homes—Patriotism and Interest—all demand our services in the best way we can render them.

Washington City, Aug. 20, 1814.

JAMES H. BLAKE, *Mayor*."

From the inception of the local militia, General Van Ness had been identified with it. For this identification he was lifted from his Congressional seat. From rank to rank he rose to the highest. At the fanfare of the trumpets, the General on a prancing charger gave the signal and the parade proceeded. These were all show affairs. When war came, although the General had the real ideas of preparation and the courage to do and offered to do, he was compelled from reasonable pride to resign. The *National Intelligencer*, October 19, 1814, has to say:

"Our city readers are already informed that John P. Van Ness, Esq., resigned the commission of Major-General of the Militia previous to the late capture of the city. We are now informed that Gen. Van Ness, after having promptly ordered out his division under the late requisition of Brig. Gen. Winder, and actively aided in promoting every measure necessary to the effectuation of the call, informed General Winder and the Executive that, considering himself as a part of his division, he held himself also in service. Very unexpectedly he found this position not admitted; and presuming from circumstances that developed themselves in the progress of those communications, that the command of the principal expedition or service on the present occasion was intended for Gen. Winder, and, being desirous of taking some active part, he intimated, that if it were not agreeable or eligible to employ him immediately in connexion, or in the same operations, with Gen. Winder which would of course give him the command according to the rule established by law, a separate command might be assigned to him; which, while it would afford him an opportunity of serving the country, would obviate the difficulty as to rank or command with Gen. Winder, and thus not interfere with the views of the Executive in that respect. But the decision being conclusive that he was not considered in service under this requisition, and no separate com-

mand or service being proposed or offered, he sent in his resignation. By this act, he transferred, a few days before the battle of Bladensburg, from a situation in which he found himself useless, to one in which, as a private individual, he might associate himself with his fellow citizens in some useful operations in the present interesting crisis; which, we are informed, he has repeatedly done."

General Van Ness was as thoughtful as he was brave—elements congenial and co-existent. The General had been relieved from the ranks, but he did not permit that to interfere with his presence and helpfulness or to do something useful in the exciting crisis. This appears from the official document:

From Records of District of Columbia

John P. Van Ness

to Thomas Hughes, Dr.

To one barrel of whiskey, 35- $\frac{3}{4}$  gal. at cts.....\$24.31  
August 24, 1814—Barrel ..... 1.00

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\$25.31

The above whiskey was ordered by Van Ness for the use of the troops on their retreat on the day of the Battle of Bladensburg, and was drank by them near the Pump not far from my store, as they passed by. The amount has been paid by said Van Ness to me this 20th day of Oct., 1814.

THOMAS HUGHES.

Having been satisfied that the within barrel of whiskey was got for our troops and drank by them at a time they were greatly in want of it—and therefore should be paid for by the corporation out of the same fund similar expences have been paid—you will please issue a checke in favor of Gen'l Van Ness for the same, he having advanced the money to Mr. Hughes.

JAMES H. BLAKE,

*Mayor of the City of Washington.*

To. Wm. Henry Whitecroft

Mar. 24, 1815.

Whiskey acct. for troops, Aug. 24, 1814.

Rec'd the above amount of \$25.31 from Henry Whitecroft, Treasurer of Washington City—March 25, 1815.

JOHN P. VAN NESS.

Hughes kept a grocery store on the south side of Pennsylvania Avenue between Sixth and Seventh streets.

The soldiers had run a nine-mile marathon with all the fleetness of prize winners. They had reached the center of the city. The general at a glance saw the opportunity to exercise his thoughtfulness. The good cheer Mr. Hughes supplied at the call of the general's purse worked wonders. The soldiers had run one-third of the way to save their bacon. The spirits not only relieved their physical exhaustion, but gave them mental uplift; they ran the remaining two-thirds of the way to the Montgomery Court-house, not as cowards but as brave men run—as a military manoeuvre.

They who consult the History of the Medical Society of the District of Columbia will learn that Dr. Blake was at the pinnacle of the profession—and at that height because of the efficacy of his remediable prescriptions—and his endorsement of the Van Ness account for whiskey proves, that in his time there were times when men for their own good were greatly in want of it.

The British invaders came the evening of August 24th and departed the afternoon of the next day.

This entry is in the *Journal*:

“Thursday, August 25th, 1814.

“This being the day to which the board of Aldermen adjourned, none of the members appeared.”

The same entry is on the journal of the Board of Common Council.

It is as plain as daylight that all of the local lawmakers were with the American Army or safely out of reach of any army.

The hostilities between the Americans and the British within the District borders had hardly ceased, when Dr. Thornton and Dr. Blake began theirs. Dr. Thornton was British born; he naturally had a kindly feeling for his countrymen; yet no one was more loyal to the country of his adoption. He, because of his nativity, notwithstanding an

officer in the American militia and active in the service, was the victim of suspicious comment by the citizens of Washington, so recently despoiled. He resorted to the *Intelligencer* as the channel for vindication. Dr. Thornton recites he went to the residence of the Mayor to ask him to accompany him to the Patent Office—he was out of town. The next day finding the Mayor not yet in the city, he, as a justice of the peace placed guards at the President's House, the Capitol and the Navy Yard to prevent plundering. When the Mayor arrived he delivered over to him the duties he had assumed.

Dr. Blake gives in the same channel the causes of absence:

"On Monday and Tuesday preceding the battle, by considerable exertions I procured about two hundred hands to work at Bladensburg, forming breastwork, in accordance with the wish of the commanding General, as communicated to me. On the night preceding the battle, I visited our camp at midnight, as many of the officers can testify, and was up the whole night. On the day of the battle, I was on the field in the midst of danger—not as a spectator, but a volunteer in the line of my profession. \* \* \* My wife with four small children had to manage and make her escape as well as she could—having no male attendant except servants; my only grown son being a volunteer in the field at the head of a company. \* \* \* At the very time my handbills were sticking up in the City, urging the citizens to the defense of their homes, my whole attention had been engaged in the discharge of my public duty and my private concerns entirely neglected.—Would it have been prudent in me to remain here filling a public office, when my power as Mayor had ceased and I could effect no good by staying? On Friday about noon, I heard the enemy had evacuated the City the night before. The Potomac Bridge being burnt, I immediately proceeded to Mason's ferry and was among the first that returned. I found it not only left by the enemy, but also by probably nine-tenths of the inhabitants."

These are extracts from the first round in the newspaper fight. Dr. Thornton gave Mayor Blake's absence as an excuse for assuming authority which Mayor Blake in error interpreted as an intimation of cowardice.

On the tidings of what happened at New Orleans, the editors of the *Intelligencer* gave full expansion to their edi-



torial wings and a part of the flight is, February 7, 1815: "The fact of the vast disparity of loss, which would stagger credulity itself, were it not confirmed by a whole army of witnesses, appeals to the heart more eloquently than the most labored illustration. The God of Battles is surely on our side."

And the Mayor, February 4, 1815, made proclamation:

"And whereas, it becomes a people relying on the favor of Heaven for support, to rejoice in every manifestation of divine goodness; and a number of the citizens of this corporation having expressed to me a wish to celebrate our brilliant triumph by an *Illumination* of this city, in which I most heartily accord; I do, therefore, hereby recommend to the citizens of this Corporation to illuminate their houses this evening at 7 o'clock, and to continue until 10 o'clock."

Later, the hero came. The citizens of Georgetown, December 30th, gave a public dinner; and the citizens of Washington a public ball, of which the Mayor was the first named manager.

#### "A Proclamation.

"The President of the United States, has this day announced by proclamation the return of *Peace*.

"In the late contest for the sacred right and honor of our country the American Army and Navy have, by the most resplendent achievements, exalted their character as high as ambition could desire.

"The American people have never failed to prove, that although naturally inclined to peace, they can brave with a manly spirit the horrors and calamities of war, when they consider the respect violated which is due not only to themselves but every independent nation.

"A retrospect of our affairs from the commencement to the cessation of hostilities, though the scene is occasionally checkered, cannot but afford a heartfelt gratification to every lover of his country.

"Whereas, in consideration of these things, the glory of our country and the return of *Happy Peace*, it is becoming to make due acknowledgement to the Supreme Ruler of events and to shew every national demonstration of joy; Therefore, I, James H. Blake, Mayor of the City of Washington, by the authority and with the advice of

the Corporation of the said city, do enjoin on the citizens generally to illuminate their respective houses this evening, commencing at 7 and ending at 9 o'clock. And I do require the public officers of the corporation to be vigilant in the preservation of peace and tranquility, February 18, 1815."

The retention of the Federal Seat at the City of Washington had been a matter of doubt. In Congress was hostility, niggardly appropriation for public buildings and no appropriation at all for street improvement. The demolition of government edifices aroused resentment in Congress and a determination to reconstruct. For reconstruction by the President was appointed an efficient commission. The feeling was intensified by the loyalty and unselfishness of the citizens. Immediately were offered temporary quarters made suitable by changes. Not on sympathetic words, the shadow of action, but in the substance of action, the citizens showed their zeal; and in consequence was approved, February 13, 1815, An Act authorizing the borrowing of \$500,000 from banks and citizens in the District of Columbia for rebuilding public buildings.

No diffidence appeared from other cities whose beauty had not been ruthlessly marred, to be the nation's city and they offered themselves.

Promptly the authorities of Philadelphia in formal action offered to take the Government back again.

In the *Intelligencer*, October 3d, is "Intelligence has been received from one of the members of the House of Representatives to his friend in this city, the Congress are making arrangements for a speedy removal to Baltimore."

In the *Baltimore Telegraph* appeared:

"George Town, Sept. 28.

"The corporation of George Town have offered to the committee of Congress the Catholic College for their accommodation, which is sufficiently large for both Houses, besides rooms for the committees—and the gentlemen of the place have come forward and offered to board members at a fair and reasonable price; say not to exceed \$10

per week. This at once breaks down the monstrous extortion practised by tavern-keepers, at \$16 per week, and removes a powerful motive to Congress leaving the District. All the acts of Congress on the subject, make the seat of government permanent in the District, but do not confine it at Washington—so that an adjournment to any part of the District may be carried, regardless of the President's veto; but in this case he will not oppose the removal to George Town. It is now openly said by members, who have been most zealous for its removal that Congress will be, beyond a doubt, united for George Town."

The editor of the *Intelligencer* was so irritated that he called the presentation "glaringly absurd." However, when Congress accepted the financial accommodations of the citizens and banks, as provided by the Act recited, the editor could dip the quill and spread upon the paper a cheerful announcement which he did.

Fifty and odd years after the Second War the subject of the removal was agitated with renewed vigor. There was the so-called Reavis agitation. The test vote in the House of Representatives had uncomfortable closeness—it was even, with the Speaker's deciding vote in the negative.

The agitator's publication had for the title page: A Change of National Empire or Arguments in favor of the Removal of the National Capital from Washington to the Mississippi Valley. L. U. Reavis, 1869. It has the quotation: "Fair St. Louis, the future Capital of the United States and of the Civilization of the Western Continent."

The editorial in the *Star*, July 26, 1869:

"That the western papers should, in these dull times, renew the agitation of the project of transferring the political metropolis of the Union from Washington to the valley of the Mississippi is not surprising because, as the Richmond Whig very justly observes, they have two outstanding topics for discussion, the hog crop in winter, and the removal of the capital in summer. But the eastern press seems to have caught the infection this time or taken up the subject for lack of something more exciting, and now in nearly every exchange we open, from all sections of the country, we find staring us in great variety of big type the headline: "Removal of the Capital!"

"Most of the large cities, some of the towns and not a few villages of half a hundred inhabitants have already set forth the peculiar and numberless advantages which they possess as sites for the seat of our central government. The New York *Tribune*, in its usual slap-dash style, disposes of the recommendation of its namesake of Chicago that St. Louis should be the elected city, and having ruled out the claims of those rival communities and those of Cincinnati, Omaha, Keokuk, Nauvoo, Hannibal, Oshkosh, Promontory Station and other aspirants for metropolitan honors, says that it results as a matter of course, that whenever the capital is removed, it must be moved to New York, and that any other change would be only temporary. But the Philadelphia *Telegraph* thinks that it would be a suicidal arrangement on both sides, as New York, as well as Congress, would suffer immeasurably in almost undefinable disasters in case they were unhappily brought into conjunction, and says if any change is made the capital should go back from whence it started, that is, to the Quaker City.

"There is a pleasing variety, at least, in the arguments put forward in behalf of the central places suggested as suitable places for the capital. It is modestly claimed for St. Louis that her morals are unexceptional and that her position on the center line of the continent, on the banks of the Father of Waters, and with more railroad facilities than any other one point, defies all competition. New York boldly asserts herself (through Mr. Greeley) to be commercial and (what will Boston say to this?) the intellectual center of the country, and demands therefore that she shall be the political center. Philadelphia is ruled out by the principle of rotation, her only claim being that the capital was removed from that city and therefore ought to go back there. The western towns including besides those we have enumerated above a hundred or two others, mostly content themselves with a statement of their peculiar geographical advantages, but some few cannot refrain from setting forth their special attractions. Thus, Chicago sets herself up as the metropolis of American wealth and enterprise, but is rather apprehensive of the good morals of her society from the 'tainted infusion of congressional manners,' Oh, dear! Milwaukee claims that her position on the mighty lakes and her inexhaustible supply of the best lager on the continent gives her the preference. Peoria boasts her 'corn juice!' the only genuine American beverage, to be purer, more abundant and cheaper than can be found anywhere else on the habitable globe and to give her pre-eminence over all rivals. Cincinnati claims to possess the advantages of all the rest—position, morals, whiskey—and in addition is the center of the pork trade of the universe.'

The Mayor with a short communication for the committee, transmitted the resolution of the Councils expressive of "the pleasure with which they and their constituents greet his return to that country, whose rights and character he has, during his absence, so eminently contributed to maintain and establish.

"Gentlemen—I have received your obliging letter of this day communicating certain resolutions of the Board of Aldermen and the Board of Common Council, of the City of Washington, and in behalf of my colleagues and myself, I beg you to present to the Corporation by thanks for the flattering manner in which they have been pleased to notice our services in the negotiation at Ghent. In asserting that the issue of that owing to the determined spirit of resistance manifested by this country, and the brilliant achievements of our military and naval forces. I am sure of the concurrence of my colleagues. A great object of the war has been accomplished in the establishment of the national character.

"The pleasure I experienced from the hearty and cordial welcome with which I have been so kindly received in this city and wherever I have been since my return, is attended with the melancholy reflection that one of my colleagues unhappily can no longer participate in the congratulations of our country.

"I thank you, gentlemen, for the sentiments you have obligingly expressed concerning me, and am with great respect

Your obedient servant,

H. CLAY.

James H. Blake, Esq.; J. Gales, Jr.; and R. C. Weightman, Esqs. Washington, 18th Sept. 1815."

"Washington City, Nov. 6, 1815.

"Sir—On behalf of the Corporation of this city, I have the honor to present to you the enclosed Resolution of The 'Board of Aldermen and Board of Common Council,' and to congratulate you on your return to your country and the bosom of your family and friends.

"Your important services in your late mission, entitle you to the gratitude of the American people—and we, whom you have resided amongst for several years, and to whom you are personally known, feel peculiar pleasure in felicitating you, and thus publicly paying that respect which we consider you to have highly merited.

"Understanding that you are about to leave the city, I haste to

express the regret I feel, in common with my fellow citizens, on the occasion, and to assure you that our best wishes attend you.

"With every consideration of respect and esteem, I am

"Your obedient servant,

"JAMES H. BLAKE.

"Honorable Albert Gallatin"

"Washington City, Nov. 6, 1815.

"Sir—I beg leave, through you, to return my thanks to the Corporation of the City of Washington, for the favorable opinion they entertain of the manner in which the duties enjoined on the ministers employed in negotiating peace with Great Britain, have been performed, and for the honor done me by the adoption of the resolution which you have transmitted to me.

"I embrace with pleasure, this opportunity to express my grateful sense of the civilities and kindness which during my residence in the city, I have uniformly experienced from its inhabitants and praying you to accept my sincere wishes for their prosperity, and for your personal happiness.

"I have the honor to be, with respectful consideration, Sir, your most obedient servant,

"ALBERT GALLATIN.

"James H. Blake, Esq.,

"Mayor of the City of Washington."

That the First Lady had unbounded popularity is evident. "As Mrs. Madison will do Mr. Dwyer the honor of attending his performance, the public are respectfully informed he will once more deliver G. A. Steven's Lecture on "Heads" at one dollar per. October 26, 1816.

Upon the retirement of Mr. Madison, the citizens of the municipalities of Georgetown and Washington, vied in their homage to Mrs. Madison. "As a small tribute of their respect, at Crawford's hotel" on March 13, 1817, the citizens of Georgetown gave a ball in the direction of the committee: John Peter, John Mason, John Cox, Walter Smith, William Whann, and Charles Worthington. On the 25th was the "City Ball to Mrs. Madison" by the citizens of Washington, as a tribute of their respect, at Davis's Hotel with the managers: James H. Blake, John Rodgers, John Graham,

Walter Jones, John P. Van Ness, John Tayloe, Richard Bland Lee and William W. Seaton.

It was an admirable custom, full of courtesy—an address to the departing Executive by the citizens through a committee of the common council or of the citizens prepared and delivered by the Mayor and a response thereto. Mr. Adams, upon completion of his remnant of a term, in pique ungallantly stole away. This initiation of the custom is at the end of Mr. Jefferson's administration. The committee of the citizens waited upon Mr. Jefferson, March 4, 1809.

"To Thomas Jefferson.

"Sir,

"The citizens of Washington cannot forego the last opportunity which may, perhaps, ever occur, to bid you a respectful and affectionate farewell. As members of the great and flourishing nation, over which you have so illustriously presided, your virtues, talents and services command their esteem, admiration, and gratitude. Embarked in the fate of this solitary republic of the world, they have in common with their fellow citizens, rejoiced in its prosperous and sympathised in its adverse fortunes, as involving everything dear to freemen. They have marked with exultation, the firm column of its glory, laid on imperishable foundations, using as a monument of the reign of principle in this quarter of the globe. To you they have been instructed to ascribe the memorable act, which, by declaring a gallant people free and independent, in a tone that appalled tyranny, instilled those sentiments and principles, which, inspiring every virtue, and urging every sacrifice, led them to triumph and empire.

"We have since beheld you with parental solicitude, and with a vigilance that never sleeps, watching over the fairest offspring of liberty, and, by your unremitted labors, in upholding, explaining and vindicating our system of government, rendering it the object of love at home and respect abroad.

"It would be a pleasing task for us, as citizens of the United States, to fill up and extend the outlines we have sketched. But, it is, as citizens of the national metropolis, that we now appear before you. In addition to every patriotic feeling that can warm our breasts, we have still further inducements to open our hearts to you on this proud, yet painful occasion.

"The world knows you as a philosopher and philanthropist; the

American people know you as a patriot and statesman—we know you in addition to all this, as a *man*. And, however your talents have extorted our respect, there is not one among us, whose predominant feeling at this moment is not that of affection for the mild and endearing virtues that have made every one here your friend, and you his. We should be lost to gratitude, did we not acknowledge that it is to you we owe much, very much of that harmony of intercourse and tolerance of opinion, which characterize our state of society—of that improvement, which, amidst unpropitious circumstances, has progressed with sure and steady steps, and above all, of that spirit of enterprise, which your beneficence and liberality have invariably aided, and which promises in a few years to render this place the fairest seat of wealth and science.

“Deeply as we feel your retirement, we approve, nay applaud it. Personal considerations aside, it was to be expected from the friend and protector of republican institutions, that he would follow, and by his co-operation strengthen, the example of the illustrious hero of the revolution.

“May you, in the retirement to which you go, be happy! As your fellow citizens will still look towards you with interest, and pray for your felicity, so will you find it impossible to lose sight of the arduous scenes through which we have passed, as well as those in store for our country. Your heart will still beat with patriotism, and the energies of your mind continue to be engaged on rational objects. In your retreat may every anxious thought be softened by the mild and tender occupations of private life! Happy, thrice happy retreat! Where patriotism and philosophy, friendship and affection, will animate, direct and soften the purest feelings of the heart! With a grateful nation we pray that you may be happy, and if the just Being, that presides over the universe, insure to you but a portion of that felicity you have conferred on others, our prayers will be fulfilled!

“ROBERT BRENT, *Chairman*.

“NICHOLAS KING, *Secretary*.”

“To the Citizens of Washington.

“I receive with peculiar gratification the affectionate address of the citizens of Washington and in the patriotic sentiments it expresses, I see the true character of the national metropolis. The station we occupy among the nations of the earth is honorable, but awful. Trusted with the destinies of this solitary republic of the world, the only monument of human rights, and the sole repository of the sacred fire of freedom and self-government, from hence, it is to be lighted up in other regions of the earth, if other regions of



the earth ever become susceptible of its genial influence. All mankind ought, then, with us, to rejoice in its prosperous, and sympathize in its adverse fortunes, as involving everything dear to man. And to what sacrifices of interest or convenience, ought not these considerations to animate us! To what compromises of opinion and inclination, to maintain harmony and union among ourselves, and to preserve from all danger this hallowed ark of human hope and happiness! That differences of opinion should arise among men, on politics, on religion, and on every topic of human inquiry, and that these should be freely expressed in a country where all our facilities are free, is to be expected. But these valuable privileges are much perverted when permitted to disturb the harmony of social intercourse, and to lessen the tolerance of opinion. To the honor of society here, it has been characterized by a just and generous liberality, and an indulgence of those affections which, without regard to political creeds, constitute the happiness of life. That the improvements of this city must proceed with sure and steady steps, follows from its many obvious advantages, and from the enterprising spirit of its inhabitants, which promises to render it the fairest seat of wealth and science.

"It is very gratifying to me that the general course of my administration is approved by fellow-citizens, and particularly that the motives of my retirement are satisfactory. I part with the powers entrusted to me by my country, as with a burthen of heavy bearing; but it is with sincere regret that I part with the society in which I have lived here. It has been the source of much happiness to me during my residence at the seat of government, and I owe it much for its kind dispositions. I shall ever feel a high interest in the prosperity of the city, and an affectionate attachment to its inhabitants.

"TH. JEFFERSON.

"March 4, 1809."

The address was presented on the sixth.

"To James Madison.

"We come, Sir, on behalf of the Citizens of Washington, to mingle our congratulations with our respect at your political retirement—congratulations that spring from our participation as Americans in the untarnished glory that accompanies you—regrets that flow from feelings alive to the loss we are so soon to experience. At this event, as citizens of a great community, we feel a pride only surpassed by our affection as men.

"When we beheld you succeeding to the place and honors of the illustrious author of the declaration of our independence, under the

auspices of whose private virtues and public duties our local institutions were devised, we felt more poignantly the extent of our loss from the uncertainty that always hangs over the future. We had found in him the enlightened friend of a place, which, among all the vicissitudes of its fortunes, he continued, with the great man who founded it, to consider the key-stone of our union.

"In him, too, we had found one, who spread a charm over society, by the urbanity, the hospitality, the kindness of his private life.

"What, then, was our satisfaction on realizing, in his friend and successor, a like devotion to principle, softened by the some urbanity, the same hospitality, the same kindness, and permit us, as we hope without wounding female delicacy, to add, irradiated by a grace and benevolence that have inspired universal respect and friendship.

"We shall never forget that, when our city felt the tempest of war, it was your wisdom and firmness that repaired the breach, and, from the causes that menaced its ruin, extracted the elements of the stability and expansion. May you long continue, yourself happy, to behold, in the prosperity of others, the attestations of your virtues, and, especially, to find in every heart in Washington, a sanctuary of gratitude.

"Bound to the union by ties indissoluble, we trust, as they are sacred, we cannot let this occasion pass without contrasting, for a moment, the past and present state of our country. At the time you were called to the Executive chair, the sky not only lowered, but the storm had already burst upon us. The world was in chaos, and violence and injustice busy in the work of destruction. At that crisis, no one could feel the weight of responsibility more than you did, or the obligations of that duty, which, while it vigorously asserted a nation's rights, abstained from wantonly endangering its vital interests. You had participated largely in forming that Constitution under which we had flourished and must have been fully sensible of the solemnity of an untried appeal which might prematurely expose it to fatal perils. But the appeal became necessary, and it was made. Its fruits are a solid peace, a name among the nations of the earth, a self-respect founded upon justice and conscious strength, and, above all, a conviction that our liberties can never be lost so long as that character endures, which formed by the first talents, is now cemented by the best blood of our country. At that era our rights were trampled upon—they are now respected; our property was plundered—it is now without danger spread over the globe; our martial character drooped—it is now elevated; our navy had gathered an ephemeral laurel—it is now

covered with immortal honor. Power and national glory, Sir, have often before been acquired by the sword, but rarely without the sacrifice of civil or political liberty. It is here, pre-eminently, that the righteous triumph of the one, under the smile of Heaven, secures the other. When we reflect that this sword was drawn under your guidance, we cannot resist offering you our own, as well as a Nation's thanks, for the vigilance with which you have restrained it within its proper limits; the energy with which you have directed it, to its proper objects, and, the safety with which you have wielded an armed force of fifty thousand men, aided by an annual disbursement of many millions without infringing a political, civil or religious right.

"We remain, with the highest respect and regard.

"JAMES H. BLAKE, *Chairman*,

"On behalf of the committee appointed by the general meeting of the citizens.

"H. CARROLL, *Secretary*."

Mr. Madison's reply.

"Gentlemen,

"I am much indebted to the citizens of Washington, in whose behalf you speak, for the expressions of regard and respect addressed to me. These sentiments are the more valuable to me, as my long residence among them has made me well acquainted with their many titles to my esteem, at the same time that it has enabled them to mark more particularly the course of my public and personal conduct. Their partiality has greatly overrated both; but they do no more than justice to my honest zeal in the service of my country, and to my friendly dispositions towards this city and its inhabitants. I have ever regarded the selection for the National Metropolis, made by its great Founder, as propitious to the national welfare, and although I could not rival my immediate predecessor in the aids he afforded, I was not less sincere in my desire for its growth and improvement. The ultimate good flowing from the disaster which at one moment clouded its prospects, is a gratifying compensation to those on whom it fell; and is among the proofs of that spirit in the American people, as a free people, which, rising above adverse events, and even converting them into sources of advantage, is the true safeguard against dangers of every sort.

"On the point of a final departure from Washington, 'I pray its citizens to be assured,' that every expression of their kindness will

be held in lively remembrance with cordial wishes for their collective prosperity and individual happiness.

"JAMES MADISON.

"James H. Blake, Esq., and the other gentlemen of the committee on behalf of the citizens of Washington."

Mr. Madison speaks of "a final departure." It was so with Mr. Jefferson. Neither visited the national metropolis after retirement. The responses of Mr. Jefferson and Mr. Madison which are direct to the addresses, now and then using the same phraseology, offer interesting contrasts with the present. In Mr. Jefferson's period the United States was the sole republic upon the earth. He says the position "is honorable but awful." He inclines to the belief it, as the monument of human rights, will light up other sections of the earth. So it has. Now are many republics; and the monarchies have moderated and modernized with republican principle.

Mayor Brent says the national metropolis promises in a few years to be the fairest seat of wealth and science. Which optimistic sentiment Mr. Jefferson repeats. A picture actor of the present, Douglas Mac Lean, says that "the great outdoors is very conducive to optimism," that nature inspires and contributes to happiness. Perhaps that was what imbued the Mayor and his constituents with exuberant hope, for the city was but a few scattered settlements and the white population including the women and children (1810) numbered no more than eight thousand two hundred. The fruition of the hope was not so soon as expected yet it has now fruition—it is "the fairest seat of wealth and science."

As a wonderful achievement, Mayor Blake cites that President Madison wielded an armed force of fifty thousand men and disbursed many millions. The United States in the World War had under arms 4,340,068 and raised by liberty loans \$21,448,112,800.

Dr. Blake determined not to be a candidate for re-election.

In his final message are the farewell words: "Permit me then in taking leave of you, from whom, as well as your predecessors, I have received every aid—to congratulate you, on our present happy and prosperous situation. Conscious I am, that I have done all in my power, with my scanty means for the best interest of the Metropolis. A retrospect will shew that much good has been done, yet I know that much remains to be done." May 19, 1817.

In the mayoral message, June 22, 1814, is: "as this is the Metropolis of the Union, the source from which principle ought to issue, so ought it to be distinguished for the correct deportment of its inhabitants and afford an example worthy of imitation." The nation's city should be a model city—a model in all respects. Mayor Blake specifies the citizens' contribution—correct deportment. That is essential, but that or anything else the citizens may contribute will not make this a model American city—it still will be lacking in an essential factor—the governmental factor. The American basic principle is that "governments are instituted among men deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed." And the consent of the governed is everywhere observed and practised except in the nation's one city.

At the organization meeting of that honorable institution of learning, the Columbian Institute, Dr. Blake was temporary chairman (October 7, 1816) and he was of the permanent officers.

Dr. Blake was of the first board of directors of the Bank of the Metropolis (January 11, 1814).

Dr. Blake was of the preliminary organization of St. John's Church. He was of the first vestry and of successive vestries.

Dr. Blake graduated in medicine at the American Medical Society, Philadelphia, 1789, in his twenty-first year. He was of the sixteen who met, September 26, 1817, to form a

Medical Society. At the organization meeting, January 5, 1818, he was elected Vice-President. He was of the incorporators.

The demands of his mayoral duties at a time requiring incessant vigilance, caused Dr. Blake to take an associate. A partnership was formed with Dr. George A. Carroll, who resided at the corner of D and 12th Streets. January 26, 1814. Subsequently Dr. Blake associated with himself, Dr. William Jones. Dr. Blake was appointed by President Madison, the Medical Supervisor with a corps of doctors and surgeons. Dr. Jones was of this corps.

Dr. Blake was the Collector of Internal Revenue from December 25, 1813; and Register of Wills from July, 1818, until his death. The salary as Mayor he relinquished.

Dr. Blake to absent son wrote:

"I am just able to sit up an hour or two, and have determined to make an effort to write you once more. Some of my physicians flatter me with the idea of a recovery, others I find despond; I consider there is but a possibility. In a day or two I shall be fifty-two years old, which is but the meridian of man's life, but so many depart earlier that I feel perfectly reconciled to my fate, and I am ready to meet death. I shall leave behind me an honorable name and fair reputation and many beloved friends and connections who must soon follow me. Thank God your Mother enjoys good health and has an excellent constitution, and may reasonably calculate on long life; and I trust will live to raise to maturity our younger children and instill into their minds proper sentiments. I calculate I shall leave her a decent support and enable her to raise and finish the education of our younger children. I pray God to take you in his Holy Keeping, to preserve, bless and prosper you, and although I may never take you by the hand again, yet I have your image daily before me. Do not be distressed at this letter, recollect mine is the fate of all flesh."

Dr. Blake's valediction is sad and manly. It shows he had the spirit to meet courageously the finality of life with its enjoyments, affections and usefulness.

Dr. Blake died July 29, 1819, 3 A.M. He was in his fifty-second year. His indisposition was fourteen months.

The funeral service was at his late residence, the 30th, at 10 A. M. The funeral was attended by the Federal Lodge, F.A.A.M. No. 1; Brooke Lodge, No. 2; Columbia Lodge, No. 3; Washington Naval Lodge, No. 4; Potomac Lodge, No. 5; Union Lodge, No. 6; Lebanon Lodge, No. 7, with a band. The Grand Master, Daniel Kurtz, was in attendance. The pallbearers were Messrs. R. C. Weightman, James M. Varnum, Ebenezer Stout, Samuel Anderson, Harvey Bestor and John McLaughlin. The remains were interred in the Methodist Episcopal Burial Ground, Georgetown, and were removed, November 2, 1870, to the William A. Gordon lot in Oak Hill Cemetery.

The *National Intelligencer* has the tribute:

"Of the character of one so well known, it is almost superfluous to speak. But to those who knew him not, we may be permitted to say, that he was one of our worthiest and most respected citizens. \* \* \* In private life, in the relations of father, husband, and friend, he was an ornament of society, and a bright example to all around him."

Dr. Blake was high in the profession that lessens the ills of life and adds to the length of life. He had legislative experience which gave him the efficiency in his magisterial duties—the mayorship. He was Mayor during the most troublous period of the United States—in the most doubtful days of existence—for it was then the least equipped to cope with a powerful adversary. He was the Mayor of the Nation's Capital, when the enemy's objective was the sacking of the public buildings which it did. The "other family servants were accustomed to say that his residence was occupied by their officers, who cared for its contents and left without having removed anything therefrom." All of the record is that Dr. Blake did his part as Mayor as well as could be done. He had thoughts and knew how to phrase them in rhetorical finish. His public letters and his proclamations are the proofs. "He was social and hospitable and his

home the meeting place of men distinguished in public life, as appears from letters of Henry Clay, John Forsyth, and others." Dr. Blake lived near Pennsylvania Avenue on the west side of Tenth Street. The widow was living at the same place in 1822. In 1826, she resided at the northwest corner of Eighth Street and Louisiana Avenue. In 1834 she was the proprietress of the Congress boarding house, at the southeast corner of Pennsylvania and Four-and-a-Half street.

Five children survived.

Thomas Holdsworth Blake. From the Biographical Congressional Directory. "Born in Calvert County, Md., June 14, 1792; attended the public schools and studied law in Washington, D. C.; member of the militia of the District of Columbia which took part in the battle of Bladensburg in 1814; moved to Kentucky and then to Indiana; began the practice of law in Terre Haute; prosecuting attorney and judge of the circuit court; gave up the practice of law and engaged in business; for several years a member of the State Legislature of Indiana; elected as an Adams Republican to the Twentieth Congress (March 4, 1827-March 3, 1829); appointed Commissioner of the General Land Office by President Tyler, May 19, 1842, served until April, 1845; chosen president of the Erie and Wabash Canal Company; visited England as financial agent of the State of Indiana; on his return died in Cincinnati, Ohio, November 28, 1849." In the District he had the title of colonel and in the early years of his life has mention in the *Intelligencer* in the social affairs.

James Heighe Blake engaged in gold mining in North Carolina. He returned to Washington and was employed in the General Land Office.

Dr. John Bond Blake had the authority, but never used it, to prescribe. Born at Colchester, Virginia, August 12, 1800.



University of Maryland, M. D. 1824. Incorporator of the Medical Society of the District of Columbia under its second charter. He was in the office of the Register of the Treasury. Commissioner of Public Buildings under Presidents Pierce and Buchanan; a member of the Board of Public Works, Secretary of the Washington National Monument Society, President of the National Metropolitan Bank and National Metropolitan Fire Insurance Company. He was an organizer of the Association of Oldest Inhabitants. He is recalled by the writer of this paper as remarkable for dignity without hauteur, courtesy and courtliness and cheerfulness and that to all he was the same without distinction to coin or color. He was the author of "Biographical Sketch of the Late Dr. Wm. Jones." He died October 26, 1881.

Joseph Richard Blake, who entered the Navy as a midshipman when eleven years of age, commissioned a lieutenant when twenty and died when twenty-four from exposure in service.

Glorvina Blake married William A. Gordon. Mr. Gordon was born in Baltimore, 1803. He was a cadet at West Point accredited to Maryland. From the Academy he came to the Quartermaster General's Office, 1824, and there he remained until his death, July 25, 1873, a shade less than fifty years. He was at a time chief clerk. He lived on Fourteenth Street between F and G Streets. From this aristocratic location he went to a more aristocratic; that is, he went to Georgetown. "He was a gentleman of unblemished reputation, and possessed fine business abilities and social qualities, which endeared him to a large circle of friends."\* This encomium is quoted, however we can safely bestow praises on Mr. and Mrs. Gordon for besides their daughter we have excellent copies and true of their characters in the talented and respected lawyers of our local bar., William A. and J. Holdsworth Gordon.

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\* The Evening Star, July 28, 1873.

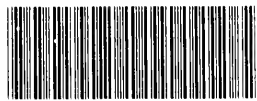








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